J Consum Policy (2017) 40:125–143
DOI 10.1007/s10603-016-9333-9

REVIEW PAPER

Regime Market Performance Analysis: Informing European Consumer Policy

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Received: 17 November 2015 / Accepted: 5 September 2016 /
Published online: 27 September 2016

Abstract The Single Market of the European Union has progressed during recent decades to encompass more than 500 million consumers in 28 EU Member States and adjoining countries. During the same period, consumer issues have received growing policy interest and policy measures have been put in place to harmonize the Single Market, that is, to make national markets more alike. Yet, in order to provide policy measures that promote desirable market outcomes, the considerable challenge of understanding differences in the market performances of participating countries and the relationships between national markets and the Single Market need to be addressed. Consequently, this article proposes the consideration of differences in terms of regimes, that is, between *groups* of similar countries, when assessing the performances of markets. Differences in market performances are analysed with the Kruskal–Wallis test using survey data from the European Commission, and results were reviewed against market studies carried out by the Commission. Findings show that regime differences in market performance can indeed be observed and that the regime approach can draw policy attention to commonalities in market arrangements in addition to the consumer issues conventionally examined, such as price differences and consumer awareness.

Keywords Consumer markets scoreboard · Consumer policy · Market performance · Policy regimes · Single market

During recent decades, consumption has increasingly become a political project, and the European Union has worked to promote a vision of European consumer society based on access, individual choice, and trust in the market. The Single Market of Europe has evolved to cover 28 Member States and adjoining countries and consists of numerous markets of which

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52 are monitored by the Consumer Market Monitoring Surveys that provide data for the European Commission's Consumer Markets Scoreboard. Consumer protection and the promotion of consumer interests constitute core issues in European integration and are increasingly considered in the context of the Single Market. It has even been argued that the competitive and border-free European economy itself fulfils the interest of the consumer in that consumer welfare is central to the success of the Single Market (Monti 2010) which, furthermore, should be a source of opportunity for all citizens (Commission of the European Communities 2007). Lower prices, greater variety, and a higher quality of goods and services have been considered the most important benefits for European consumers (European Commission 2010). Consequently, competition rules have a prominent role in the free movement of goods and services, and the European Member States have also regulated markets in other ways to protect consumers from, for instance, product-related damages and fraud. European consumer law, in turn, developed through its linkages with the Single Market in the 1990s and later progressed in the direction of full harmonization (Benöhr 2013). Regulation that targets better market performance also aims to foster conditions favourable to innovations and dynamic business environments in the global economy. In this context, Member States should then invest in policy means and tools that are locally necessary to make the Single Market work (Commission of the European Communities 2007).

In Europe, consumer laws and protection have received growing attention since the 1960s, both at the national level and in diverse national settings (Benöhr 2013; Chatriot 2006). This development has led to a situation where consumer policy is rooted in numerous national and European policy technicalities and market arrangements. An established approach to examining the situation is to compare the policies and market arrangements of individual countries with the policies and prerequisites of the Single Market of the European Union (see Weatherill 2013 on consumer law and policy; Smits 2015 on distribution of competences between European Union and Member States; European Commission 2015a on EU economic situation, policy and surveillance, and country reports, for instance), but this readily becomes a complex analysis concerned either with very specific descriptions or with general recommendations, as is exemplified in European market reports (see, for instance, GfK EU3C 2012, which identifies a wide variety of specific meat types available across Member States yet focuses on standardized information on food). In contrast, selecting the Single Market perspective as a starting point bypasses national economic and institutional arrangements which, nevertheless, need to be addressed. The domain of consumer policy, however, tends to overcome this dichotomy and could be particularly successful in doing so, as evidenced by regular calls for policy renewal (Hondius 2012; Reisch 2004; Repo et al. 2009, 2013).

Further opportunities to overcome the limitations of either/or analysis can be provided by classifying European countries in terms of the varieties of capitalism that they exhibit (see Hall and Soskice 2001; Hancké et al. 2007). These differences may be accounted for in numerous ways, including the degree of coordination of the market economy (Hall and Soskice 2001), according to country archetypes (Hall 2007), or in light of interest group membership and organization (Hancké et al. 2007). Nonetheless, in this article, differences are examined from the perspective of consumer policy regimes, which draw attention to similarities between groups of countries and cover the principles, norms, rules, and institutions of consumer policy (adapted from Abbott et al. 2000; Krasner 1982). Regimes do evolve, but slowly, as they are embedded in the markets and procedures of their respective countries.

The regime approach provides the possibility of simplifying analysis of a large number of markets and interactions between national markets and the Single Market and yet is sufficiently institutionally embedded (see Micklitz 2003; Svetiev 2013) to allow for the formulation and design of distinct policies relating to markets by clarifying the degree to which selected policy measures impact different kinds of markets (see Hill 2014; Howlett et al. 2015). Using the market for electricity services as an example, consumers in Continental Europe assess market performance far more highly than consumers in Southern Europe (see Table 2), but transparency and switching between suppliers may prove to be insufficient if production arrangements cannot absorb changes. Furthermore, unified or harmonized policies may result in dissimilar effects in different circumstances. Therefore, it is valuable to acknowledge that economic and institutional differences between countries and groups of countries do play a role in European policy making.

This article argues that market performance issues should be addressed not only at Single Market or national levels but also at a policy regime level. Such a regime approach draws attention to economic and institutional commonalities between countries and is therefore apt to supplement the dichotomous relationship between national markets and the Single Market (cf. Howlett 2009; John 2013; Wison 2010). Testing the approach empirically with data from the European Commission's Consumer Market Monitoring Surveys also reveals whether the heritage of national economies and institutions still dominates market performance or if markets have become Europeanized in the form of a Single Market. The study is conducted in light of a situation in which European policies promoting the Single Market, and the role of consumers within it, are increasingly focusing on harmonized market arrangements (Hondius 2012; Svetiev 2013).

This article first develops and positions the idea of market regimes in the context of the Single Market. It then demonstrates, using statistical analysis, that there are performance differences in selected markets between five identified economic and institutional regimes in Europe. The results are then positioned in a policy context through a review of recommendations provided by in-depth reports on these markets. The concluding section of the article discusses the usability of the regime approach against the background of economically and institutionally different, yet in many ways also similar, national markets and their relationship to the Single Market. Special emphasis is given to policy development in the Single Market.

Commonalities in the Development of Markets

The development of consumer markets is often described from institutional and historical perspectives (Bevir and Trentmann 2004; Daunton and Hilton 2001), an approach that takes into account the organization of production, distribution, and consumption; the roles of government; and the regulation of markets, as well as the activities of interest groups. Indeed, to understand the consumer markets of today, it is very useful to follow-up on how markets have emerged and developed. Much of the development of consumer markets has taken place in national frameworks although international trade and, more recently, economic integration have also played a role. In Europe, the Single Market has obviously been significant in this context but so has economic globalization, in particular after the 1990s when the importance of China and other Asian countries was accentuated in the global economy. Yet, even though economic integration and economic globalization have progressed, national institutional arrangements still have a great effect on many consumer markets, something made evident in the continuing development of the Single European Market and ongoing harmonization of European consumer law (see Howarth and Sadeh 2014; Weatherill 2013).

There have already been attempts to identify commonalities in market development within groups of countries. These are contextually oriented and take economic and institutional arrangements into consideration while also acknowledging that there can be varying, albeit similar, ways to address similar consumer issues. For instance, the European Commission has followed this reasoning when distinguishing Member States in terms of geographical location in the North, South, West, and East (European Commission 2013a)—or in terms of EU15 and EU13, reflecting the time of transition into the European Union (European Commission 2015b)—in its attempts to explain current market performance as well as provide transnational policy proposals for the future. As noted above, the idea of considering countries in groups or as regimes receives support from the literature on varieties of capitalism (see Hall and Soskice 2001; Hancké et al. 2007). While regimes, and the countries belonging to them, may be defined differently for specific analytical purposes, the regime approach helps to look inside the structures of the Single Market and beyond national specificities and also encourages interdisciplinary explanations of market performance (combining law, policy, and the economy in this article). Acknowledging similarities in countries of the same regime, while accounting for differences between regimes, could offer the possibility of reframing analysis of the market monitoring survey and, accordingly, assist in formulating successful policy measures for different types of challenges and settings. This article explores whether there are grounds for proceeding with such a regime analysis and looks for prospects against the backgrounds of legal traditions and economic organization (see La Porta et al. 2008).

This article identifies consumer market regimes on the basis of common market arrangements, legal traditions, and established country categorizations provided by the European Commission. Regime identification is based, in particular, on classifications from Trumbull (2006) directed at consumption and production regimes and Micklitz (2004) on legal traditions in consumer protection. These coincide to a large extent, but when they do not, deviations are discussed. Additionally, an eastern regime has been identified, following up on European integration. The following sections explain the basis for the classification before introducing five European regimes, which all represent different types of consumer markets.

Micklitz identified commonalities and differences in organization, areas, and activities of four European consumer protection models in the 1970s: common law, the Roman (or Mediterranean), the German, and the Scandinavian approaches (Benöhr 2013; Micklitz 2004, 2003). Common law, being pragmatic by nature, constrained regulation to certain areas such as product liability and competition and promoted self-regulation, while the Roman tradition with its legacy of policy centralism highlighted the interplay between free markets and interventionism. In contrast, consumer interest groups and the goal of systemic perfection played important roles in Germany, while efficiency induced by state agencies was accentuated in the Scandinavian countries. Micklitz's categorization (2004) shows that there are indeed observable commonalities and differences between markets in groups of countries and that it is analytically useful to consider these when examining markets and their development. Of course, models evolve over time and the development of consumer protection has followed trends of state interventionism in markets (Reich 1992).

Extending the scope from the legal tradition to ideas, institutions, and market arrangements, Trumbull (2006) reviewed consumption and production regimes circa 1990, classifying countries according to their organization of consumption (economic, associational, and political) and production (market, corporatist, and statist). When doing so, he looked at a number of institutional arrangements with regard to misleading advertising, unfair contract terms, standards of product liability, and legal class actions, thus demonstrating again how challenging it is to attempt to classify countries unambiguously. These classifications hold up well in the regime framework, and they also supplement those produced by Micklitz, which were based on legal traditions and consumer protection. For instance, the UK with its common law tradition appeared in several of Trumbull's cases to be positioned close to Spain with its Roman legal tradition (Micklitz 2004; Trumbull 2006).

Trumbull's regime work is seminal in that it attempts to explain how consumption and production can be organized in varying ways that relate to ideas and institutions underlying market arrangements, thereby producing four institutionally embedded market regimes in Europe. In this context, consumption takes on an economic, associational, or political character while production is market-oriented, corporatist, or statist. In his depictions, Germany and Austria are distinguished by socio-politically organized, corporatist production, which is influenced by major interest groups, and policies that consider the consumer to be a market actor rather than an individual in need of protection. Production in the Scandinavian countries also adheres to corporatist arrangements, but consumption is more influenced by consumers' associations. In the UK, both production and consumption are organized around markets. In France, in contrast, production is characteristically state-centred with the realm of consumption politically arranged. Outside Europe, Trumbull recognized that in the USA, consumption was politically organized around market production, whereas Japan lay at the other extreme with economically organized consumption and statist production. Trumbull's categorization of countries into regimes was exploratory and not comprehensive in terms of data as it was only based on accounts published in French, German, and English. This left out accounts published in other domestic languages and, in effect, also excludes many countries from the analysis. For instance, many new EU Member States were not considered.

Trumbull's identification of consumption and production regimes, Micklitz's of legal approaches, and the European Commission's distinction of North, South, West, and East markets, as well as other categorizations, all identify stable similarities in and differences between national economic and institutional arrangements (see May and Jochim 2013). While regimes are not permanent formations and existing ones may disintegrate and new emerge, this requires substantial changes in policy paradigms and shifts in political power and organizational arrangements (Krasner 1982; Wison 2000). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the identified regimes are very similar in spite of being developed on the basis of different criteria and for different aims (Single Market development, legal traditions and harmonization, identification of consumption and production systems). The notion of regimes is also broader in scope than that of a national consumer policy system, which is often characterized by the activities of public actors and interest groups; furthermore, it is abstract in the sense that it relates to market arrangements at a transnational level.

The Scandinavian tradition regime emerges clearly in all three northern states (Norway and Iceland fit here but have been left out of the EC definition due to their not being Member States of the EU), as does the Southern European (Roman or Mediterranean) regime. Eastern Europe also clearly forms a regime of its own, as it differs from all others in terms of its fairly recent conversion to a market economy (see Nölke and Vliegenthart 2009; Svetiev 2013). The 12 core countries of the European Union (i.e., those before the European Union expanded in 1995) are more difficult to consider as a regime. In Micklitz's categorization, a distinction is drawn between the common law and the German approaches. Trumbull, on the other hand, sees that while consumption is market-based in the UK, Germany, and Austria, production is market-based only in the first while being characterized by corporatism in the latter two. Hence, the 12 countries and subsequent new Member States are further broken down into two distinct regimes in this article: namely the Anglo regime and the Continental European regime.

Using Trumbull's, Micklitz's, and the EC's categorizations of countries and their consumer markets as cues, this article depicts five regimes to be used in analysis of market performance: the Anglo, Continental European, Eastern European, Scandinavian, and Southern European regimes, each representing different ways of organizing consumption and production. This categorization builds on and extends Trumbull's categorization of regimes (2006) with the assistance of insights from Micklitz (2004) and European Commission (2015b). Accordingly, the regimes are named geographically with the exception of the Anglo regime, which is named according to legal tradition. Regimes and the countries categorized in them for this analysis are shown in Table 1.

Although this regime categorization is unequivocal for most countries, the procedure is less clear for Cyprus and France. In this article, Cyprus is categorized in the Anglo, rather than the Southern European regime, due to its institutional heritage in the Commonwealth of Nations and its British-influenced administration, thus highlighting the greater impact of institutional and legal traditions compared with geographical position. Similarly, France is here categorized in the Continental European regime, highlighting its centrality in the Single Market and its distinction from market arrangements characterizing the Anglo regime; however, the positioning of France in a regime is by no means straightforward, and France has even been treated as an archetype of its own in literature on varieties of capitalism (Hall 2007). According to Trumbull (2006), France is an outlier distinguished by a political organization of consumption and a statist organization of production, while Micklitz depicts France in a prominent position in the Roman legal tradition, highlighting an interplay between free markets and interventionism (Micklitz 2004, 2003). From a European economic perspective, however, France merits a place in the Continental regime due to its major impact on shaping Europe and the Single Market and cannot be treated as an outlier.

The regime account used here resembles, without exactly following, the progress and expansion of the European Union and its Single Market in terms of inclusion of new Member States and their transition. This is not a coincidence because, temporally, expansion

Table 1 Country categorization according to examined regimes

Regimes				
Anglo	Continental Europe	Eastern Europe	Scandinavia	Southern Europe
Cyprus	Austria	Bulgaria	Denmark	Greece
Ireland	Belgium	Croatia	Finland	Italy
Malta	France	Czech Republic	Iceland	Portugal
The UK	Germany	Estonia	Norway	Spain
	Luxembourg	Hungary	Sweden	
	The Netherlands	Lithuania		
		Latvia		
		Poland		
		Romania		
		Slovenia		
		Slovakia		

has tended to engage similar kinds of neighbouring countries. Furthermore, the regime account resonates well with the literature on varieties of capitalism (Bohle and Greskovits 2007; Hall and Soskice 2001, Hancké et al. 2007) and on the economic consequences of legal traditions (La Porta et al. 2008). Thus, the performance of markets in European countries is reviewed in subsequent sections in terms of the practice and profiles of the groups outlined above. This procedure empirically tests whether there are identifiable differences between the performances of regimes and whether the European Commission's Consumer Markets Scoreboard can be used as a tool for observing such differences.

Regime Performance According to Survey Data

Regime performance is examined through the market performance indicator developed in the European Commission's Consumer Markets Scoreboard (European Commission 2014a, 2014b), a key diagnostic tool for monitoring the performance of product and service markets from a consumer perspective (European Commission 2010). Four scoreboard surveys of this kind have been conducted so far (European Commission 2010, 2011, 2013b, 2014a), which have monitored products and services that comprise more than half the average household budget, excluding housing, medical products, and education. It has proven challenging to categorize services coherently, and minor changes have been made over the years. New service markets have also been added (spectacles and lenses in 2011 and online gambling in 2013). Nevertheless, scoreboard indicators on services have remained stable over the years for services as well as goods, indicating that the scoreboard procedure has reached a high degree of maturity.

While the Commission's method of collecting data on consumer markets has been systematic and extensive, the results have proven difficult to analyse for the purposes of consumer policy. Data has primarily been used to identify markets of goods and services that underperform, providing benchmarking at the level of the Single Market as well as of national markets. More detailed market studies, however, have then been conducted from the perspective of the Single Market. Yet, while there unquestionably has been considerable economic integration and legal harmonization, much consumption still takes place in economically local and legally national settings. Furthermore, harmonization and integration have also taken place between neighbouring and similar countries, that is, not only in the direction of the Single Market.

The scoreboard tracks the performances of 52 consumer markets of goods and services in the European countries. Here, the 10 markets which the European Commission has selected for separate extensive in-depth market studies are examined: meat and meat products, fuel for vehicles, electricity services, internet service provision, small electronic appliances, large electronic appliances, other electronic products, second-hand cars, bank accounts, and investments, pensions, and securities. Overall, these markets have been found to have performance issues: Of those involving goods, one ranks at the higher end, three at the lower end, and one in the middle of the 52 markets examined in the Consumer Market Monitoring Surveys, while all service markets were studied rank at the lower end of performance. The scoreboard seeks to identify markets that are perceived by consumers to deliver less than desired outcomes in a statistically reliable and comparable way in 30 markets, while also helping to identify socio-economic groups experiencing particular problems. In order to take a closer look at market issues, the European Commission has conducted parallel in-depth studies on selected markets, enabling the explanation of potential differences in market performance in greater detail (European Commission 2013a). This procedure reflects the fact that governance of the Single Market takes place through institutional mechanisms, rules, and practises while aiming for concrete benefits for individuals and businesses. Monitoring the Single Market attempts to recognize market failures as well as Member State adherence to the Single Market.

The data being used in this article is from the most recent Consumer Markets Scoreboard, the tenth, for which data were collected in the spring of 2013 via a survey covering the 28 EU Member States, Norway, and Iceland, conducted by telephone interview. Responses from samples of 500 adult consumers, representative in terms of socio-demography and telephone ownership and with experience of the markets in question, were collected in each country with the exceptions of Cyprus, Iceland, Luxembourg, and Malta in which 250 responses were collected. Each consumer could respond to questions concerning a maximum of eight markets, meaning that the minimum number of interviews amounted to 3250 per country (1625 for the exceptions). Altogether, the scoreboard covers assessments from 14,000 European consumers and 52 markets in 30 countries, representing an immense undertaking in data collection. A detailed description of the data collection procedure can be found in the European Commission (2013a). The data used in this article were collected from the online interactive dashboards provided by the European Commission (2014b).

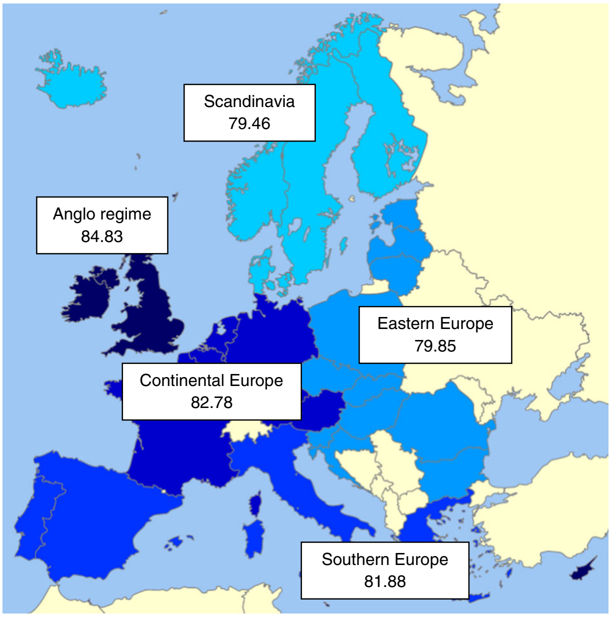
The scoreboard's key measure is its market performance indicator (MPI), which is a composite indicator taking into account four key aspects of consumer experience: (1) comparability of goods and services, (2) trust in retailers or suppliers, (3) problems and the degree to which they have led to complaints, and (4) consumer satisfaction. The components are rated on a continuous scale from 1 to 10 except for the component concerning problems and complaints, which is rated categorically (10, no problems; 5, problem but no complaint; 3, problem with complaint to friends; 2, problem with complaint to retailer or to manufacturer; and 0, problem with complaint to third party) (GfK 2010). The four components are weighted equally, and the maximum total score is 100.

The MPI has been designed to assist consumer policymaking and reflects consumers' subjective assessments of market performance within this setting. The Commission, for its part, has reviewed MPI data, concluding that the indicators are internally consistent and represent separate dimensions (GfK 2010).

Figure 1, depicting the MPI for small household appliances, demonstrates performance differences between regimes: The Anglo regime shows the best performance with a mean of 84.83, followed by the Continental regime and the Southern European regime (82.78 and 81.88, respectively). Eastern Europe and Scandinavia trail in performance (79.85 and 79.64). Differences in means of MPIs between regimes are a first indication of variable regime performance, while Table 2 presents MPIs for regimes as well as all studied countries and markets and provides more support for the hypothesis.

Examination of the MPI means shows that Continental Europe and Anglo regimes do well in market performance as they both rank above the European average on all 10 markets. Southern Europe ranks above average on four, Scandinavia on three, and Eastern Europe on only two markets. The comparison of the means of regime MPIs provides a rudimentary overview of regime performance differences that distinguishes top performers from the rest. Yet, a simple comparison of means does not explain the statistical significance of the differences—that is, how seriously the differences should be considered—nor address the cohesion of the regimes, a useful element when comparing and attempting to understand consumption and production arrangements.

Fig. 1 Market performance for small household appliances across five European market regimes[1]



While there are observable differences in the means of market performance across regimes and markets, analysis taking into account the distributions of MPIs within regimes (i.e., between countries) is a better method for analysing regime differences than simple comparison, as it takes into account MPI levels and their variation across countries within regimes. Thus, comparing the distribution of MPI levels across the studied countries rather than their means provides more complete insights into regime differences in terms of market performance. Furthermore, this allows the use of tools for more elaborate statistical analysis.

To further this goal, the Kruskal–Wallis test—a non-parametric method for testing whether two or more independent samples of different sizes are distributed equally—is used to observe differences in market performances between the regimes. Being non-parametric, the Kruskal–Wallis test does not assume a normal distribution of observations, which cannot be assumed in MPIs by country. The test is also suitable for small sample sizes, something which is important when comparing indicators from 30 countries. The null hypothesis of the Kruskal–Wallis test is that the samples of all compared groups are distributed equally. The rejection of the null hypothesis, on the other hand, depicts that at least one sample differs from the others (Anderson et al. 2010; Sheskin 2004).

As the Kruskal–Wallis test observes differences between mean ranks of groups, it is suitable for our study's goal of examining differences in MPIs across the five identified consumption and production regimes. The test also allows for pairwise comparison of groups. It should be noted, however, that pairwise differences are not a prerequisite for differences across all groups, that is, the complete set of five studied regimes. Instead, pairwise comparisons should be seen to support the analysis of the Kruskal–Wallis test focusing on observing differences

[1] The map was created using online software provided by Phil Archer. License: Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike (CC BY-SA 3.0).

Table 2 Market performance indicators (MPIs) for regimes across 10 markets

Regimes and countries	Markets									
	Small household appliances	Large household appliances	Other electronic products	Fuel for vehicles	Meat and meat products	Bank accounts	Internet provision	Electricity services	Second-hand cars	Investments, pensions and securities
Anglo Regime										
Cyprus	88.8	86.5	88.9	85.4	86.9	81.2	86.8	70.7	83.2	77.7
Ireland	83.2	81.4	81.5	75.8	75.2	63.1	68.9	75.1	70.0	63.3
Malta	83.9	82.9	83.3	81.6	81.8	81.7	80.1	76.1	83.1	82.6
The UK	83.4	83.3	83.4	80.1	74.5	70.8	70.1	69.3	72.7	68.6
Mean	84.83	83.53	84.28	80.73	79.60	74.20	76.48	72.80	77.25	73.05
Continental Europe										
Austria	85.1	83.1	81.6	74.5	75.2	71.0	71.9	77.0	71.4	67.2
Belgium	82.3	80.8	80.9	82.1	78.1	74.9	72.0	75.6	73.2	71.0
France	80.6	80.8	81.1	81.5	80.9	77.0	76.2	79.2	77.7	77.1
Germany	82.8	83.6	81.3	79.2	83.0	80.5	78.7	81.4	79.2	78.5
Luxembourg	84.1	83.2	83.7	81.2	83.8	78.8	82.7	80.3	81.0	80.2
The Netherlands	81.8	81.2	81.1	82.8	76.2	73.4	71.2	76.3	74.5	64.6
Mean	82.78	82.12	81.62	80.22	79.53	75.93	75.45	78.30	76.17	73.10
Eastern Europe										
Bulgaria	75.9	77.1	77.3	66.0	64.7	72.8	72.7	48.9	62.8	63.2
The Czech Republic	82.4	82.3	81.1	73.7	72.5	73.9	75.0	72.9	64.9	70.9
Estonia	82.7	81.6	80.6	78.9	78.2	82.4	78.2	66.2	66.2	70.8
Croatia	74.2	73.6	73.6	67.1	64.3	68.4	65.2	63.9	60.2	60.7
Hungary	78.8	78.8	79.1	75.5	73.0	68.7	72.4	71.5	63.9	64.6
Latvia	83.2	83.1	83.7	83.7	76.0	84.0	80.3	68.6	71.4	75.3
Lithuania	80.0	82.0	81.5	79.7	74.1	81.0	78.4	77.7	63.4	68.3

Table 2 (continued)

Regimes and countries	Markets									
	Small household appliances	Large household appliances	Other electronic products	Fuel for vehicles	Meat and meat products	Bank accounts	Internet provision	Electricity services	Second-hand cars	Investments, pensions and securities
Poland	80.6	82.6	81.3	72.8	69.3	72.6	72.0	70.6	63.9	65.7
Romania	77.8	79.6	79.3	70.2	65.9	71.4	76.5	72.7	67.7	67.5
Slovakia	81.1	80.8	78.9	78.4	68.0	75.7	76.3	78.1	65.5	65.0
Slovenia	81.7	81.2	80.5	82.3	74.6	76.7	73.9	81.0	67.8	62.0
Mean	79.85	80.25	79.72	75.30	70.96	75.24	74.63	70.19	65.25	66.73
Scandinavia										
Denmark	81.9	82.8	78.7	85.4	70.7	72.9	68.6	75.4	71.1	70.7
Finland	81.7	82.0	80.9	85.4	78.2	79.3	70.6	77.5	73.3	73.2
Iceland	77.3	76.4	79.0	72.1	68.4	67.2	63.6	71.3	70.1	66.2
Norway	77.4	77.5	77.0	76.6	71.0	78.3	69.5	73.8	69.6	68.3
Sweden	79.9	79.1	76.7	83.1	70.5	74.7	64.5	73.5	68.7	63.6
Mean	79.64	79.56	78.46	80.52	71.76	74.48	67.36	74.30	70.56	68.40
Southern Europe										
Greece	83.6	82.2	82.9	73.0	79.8	75.8	78.4	65.2	79.7	77.6
Italy	81.1	80.1	81.5	69.7	76.5	65.5	70.3	65.7	71.4	68.2
Portugal	82.7	81.0	82.0	70.7	78.0	67.9	69.1	66.3	65.7	68.2
Spain	80.1	78.0	78.2	68.8	77.7	55.6	62.0	58.5	73.1	58.9
Mean	81.88	80.33	81.15	70.55	78.00	66.20	69.95	63.93	72.48	68.23
Mean of all countries	81.34	80.95	80.69	77.24	74.90	73.91	73.20	72.01	70.88	69.32

Markets are presented in order of overall performance, with highest MPIs on the left and lowest to the right between groups. The precedence of group-level differences is emphasized by the understanding that pairwise comparisons should not be carried out unless statistically significant differences across a group have first been observed. If no statistically significant pairwise differences emerge, it is useful to review differences with low values as these indicate differences which merit scrutiny. IBM SPSS Statistics software version 22 was used in the analysis.

Table 3 shows the results of the applied Kruskal–Wallis test. Statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level on market performance in the five observed regimes could be identified in seven of the 10 studied markets: small household appliances, other electronic products, meat and meat products, fuel for vehicles, internet provision, electricity provision, and second-hand cars. These markets are on a general level characterized not only by standardized goods and products but also by services. In Table 3, these differences are labelled as rejecting the null hypothesis of same distribution of mean ranks. No statistically significant regime performance differences could be observed in the markets for large household appliances, bank accounts, and investment and pension markets.

Observing statistically significant differences in MPIs in seven out of 10 markets supports the idea that regimes indeed perform differently. The remaining three markets where statistically significant differences in MPIs cannot be observed, in turn, can be classified as markets for capital services and durable goods, and the market for second-hand cars appears as the only exception to this classification. In these markets—bank accounts on the one hand and investments, pensions, and securities on the other—differences appear within regimes rather than between them, with the exception being the market for large household appliances.

A pairwise comparison of regimes across markets provides a closer view of regime performances (Table 4). Statistically significant differences can be observed in five markets showing variation in regime performance: small household appliances, other electronic products, meat and meat products, electricity provision, and second-hand cars. On the fuel for

Table 3 Market performance index means, variation, and performance differences across regimes

	Market Performance Indicator										
	Anglo regime		Continental Europe		Eastern Europe		Scandinavia		Southern Europe		*p* value*
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Small household appliances	84.83	2.67	82.78	1.62	79.85	2.90	79.64	2.23	81.88	1.57	.009**
Large household appliances	83.53	2.15	82.12	1.32	80.25	2.84	79.56	2.78	80.33	1.77	.083
Other electronic products	84.28	3.20	81.62	1.05	79.72	2.63	78.46	1.70	81.15	2.05	.008**
Fuel for vehicles	80.73	3.97	80.22	3.05	75.30	5.92	80.52	5.93	70.55	1.81	.026*
Meat and meat products	79.60	5.87	79.53	3.58	70.96	4.78	71.76	3.74	78.00	1.36	.005**
Bank accounts	74.20	8.94	75.93	3.52	75.24	5.32	74.48	4.83	66.20	8.32	.339
Internet provision	76.48	8.52	75.45	4.61	74.63	4.13	67.36	3.12	69.95	6.72	.037*
Electricity services	72.80	3.31	78.30	2.34	70.19	8.73	74.30	2.31	63.93	3.64	.007**
Second-hand cars	77.25	6.90	76.17	3.72	65.25	3.00	70.56	1.76	72.48	5.76	.001**
Investments, pensions, and securities	73.05	8.71	73.10	6.43	66.73	4.36	68.40	3.75	68.23	7.63	.277

p values of Kruskal–Wallis test for equality of means. H0: Means are equal. H0 is rejected if $p < .05$

$^{**}p < .01$; $^{*}p < .05$

Table 4 Pairwise comparisons of regime differences across markets

Market	Regime 1 (mean)	Regime 2 (mean)	Adjusted sig.
Small household appliances	Anglo (84.83)	Scandinavia (79.34)	0.034*
	Anglo (84.83)	Eastern Europe (79.85)	0.030*
Other electronic products	Anglo (84.28)	Scandinavia (78.46)	0.009**
Meat and meat products	Continental Europe (79.53)	Eastern Europe (70.96)	0.022*
Fuel for vehicles	Scandinavia (80.52)	Southern Europe (70.55)	0.086
Internet provision	Eastern Europe (74.63)	Scandinavia (67.36)	0.061
Electricity services	Continental Europe (78.30)	Southern Europe (63.93)	0.003**
Second-hand cars	Continental Europe (76.17)	Eastern Europe (65.25)	0.002**
	Anglo (77.25)	Eastern Europe (65.25)	0.015*

**$p < .01$; *$p < .05$

vehicles and internet provision markets, statistically significant differences cannot be observed, but in line with the Kruskal–Wallis test, it is then still useful to look at the differences closest to being statistically significant.

Regimes providing instances of statistically significant outperformance of other regimes include the Anglo regime and Continental Europe. Regimes being outperformed in statistically significant measures include Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, and Southern Europe. The Anglo regime outperforms Scandinavia and Eastern Europe in markets for small household appliances, Scandinavia in the market for other electronic products, and Eastern Europe in the market for second-hand cars. Continental Europe, in turn, outperforms Eastern Europe in markets for meat and meat products as well as second-hand cars. It further outperforms Southern Europe in electricity services. Performance comparisons of markets with differences that are not statistically significant are more mixed, as Scandinavia outperforms Southern Europe in the vehicle fuel market, and Eastern Europe outperforms Scandinavia in the internet provision market.

To conclude, there are statistically significant differences in market performances across regimes, and pairwise performance differences between regimes can also be observed. Overall, the Continental European and Anglo regimes perform well as they rank above average on all observed markets. It also appears that markets for products with global origins (small and large household appliances, other electronic products, fuel for vehicles) perform better across all regimes than markets which adhere to national and local conditions (meat and meat products, bank accounts, internet provision, electricity services, second-hand cars, investments, pensions and securities). Potential reasons and conditions for this are examined in the following section which looks at results and policy formulation in the European Commission's market studies.

Comparison of Regime Analysis with Policy Responses

While the idea of distinct market performances across regimes has received support from this article's analysis, a closer look at studies of respective markets is required to take the analysis to the policy field. This has, indeed, been the procedure of the European Commission's Consumer Markets Scoreboard: to first identify markets which are of particular interest, then perform more detailed studies on them, and eventually provide formulations for policy responses. Next, the policy recommendations from the studies showing regime market performance differences are discussed: bank accounts (Van Dijk Management Consultants 2009; TNS 2012); electronic products (European Commission 2012); electricity services (ECME Consortium 2010); fuel for vehicles (Civic Consulting 2014); internet provision (Civic Consulting 2012; European Commission 2013c); investments, pensions, and securities (Synovate 2011); large household appliances (European Commission 2012); meat and meat products (GfK EU3C 2012); second-hand cars (European Commission 2015b); and small household appliances (European Commission 2012). When market studies have been developed into Commission documents, the latter are here given priority due to their closer relationship to policy making.

Table 5 summarizes the main policy responses to underperformance in market studies. Policy responses that have been defined in terms of advancing the Single Market have a particular focus on price differences. Correspondingly, policy responses that advance national markets relate to raising consumer awareness by focusing on information, transparency, and guidelines. While neither response category can be considered unequivocal as they can take place at both levels, the categorization nonetheless identifies a key distinction and connects policy to respective market arrangements and institutions. Market-level policy responses are considered in the table, and policy responses address the main message of the recommendations.

It is noteworthy that advancing the Single Market as a policy response accounts for two kinds of markets: one for household appliances and one for electronic goods. These markets can be characterized as global and are dominated by Asian producers. As a major importer, Europe and its Single Market can have decisive effects on the global market for these goods. From a consumer perspective, there are long traditions of protecting consumers against faulty goods across different kinds of market economies. A regime approach could provide more options in the formulation of market policies for global products. For instance, technical expectations or features of products do not explain market performance differences in small household appliances between the Anglo regime and Scandinavia, as these compete in global markets. Consumers have similar expectations across countries, and no general market dysfunctions can be observed (European Commission 2012). Regime analysis suggests that performance differences should then be attributed rather to the activities of market players than the products themselves.

Table 5 Policy responses to underperformance in market studies

Main policy response	Markets	Policy measures	Insights from regime analysis
Advance Single Market	- Electronic products - Large household appliances - Small household appliances	Promote greater integration of markets, cross-border commerce (focus on price differences)	Significant differences in regime performance in 2 out of 3 markets
Advance markets on national level	- Bank accounts - Electricity services - Fuel for vehicles - Internet provision - Investments, pensions, and securities - Meat and meat products - Second-hand cars	Raise consumer awareness (focus on information, transparency, guidelines)	Significant differences in regime performance in 5 out of 7 markets

Advancing markets at the national level indeed appears a more prevalent policy response, demonstrating that the Single Market consists of a great number of national markets, all with their embedded economic realities and institutions. Measures to advance markets at the national level focus on raising consumer awareness and also relate to consumer protection and are remarkably similar across markets. When policy is formulated to promote a common European-level approach (such as standardized European information to increase consumer choice in the market for meat and meat products and an EU-wide, colour-coding scheme for labelling in the market for vehicle fuel), the measures for implementing this still rely on national institutions (monitoring competition in retailing, ensuring quality of information, emphasizing national agencies, considering even the local level, promoting national quality labels). Regime analysis could here provide commonalities between various kinds of national markets. As an example, the market for internet provision, while generally exhibiting a lower level of performance, also demonstrates performance differences in a service which is similar across national markets. Again, the explanatory focus lies more on the activities of market players than on the technical features of the service. Internet provision is regulated at a national level, while the European Union is aiming for a Single Market (European Commission 2013c). Acknowledging performance differences between regimes and identifying their underlying reasons provide opportunities to tackle shortcomings in market performance evident both at national or Single Market level.

There appears to be no strict logic as to why a policy response mainly addresses the Single Market or the national level. It could, for instance, be argued that the market for second-hand cars could be advanced more in terms of the Single Market rather than the national level, but this is not the main recommendation of the market study (European Commission 2015b). Similarly, the policy response to the market for appliances (European Commission 2012) could, rather than being seen in the context of the Single Market, also be seen to call for consumer awareness at the national level. The performance differences identified in the regime analyses provide no further insights to this.

The twofold policy response, advancing the Single Market for some goods while advancing national markets for other goods and services, reflects the established relationships between the European Union and its Member States. While the EU and its Member States are obviously the key players in advancing markets, the advancement could nevertheless benefit from a regime approach, resulting in an increase in policy options while attempting to keep policy complexity at an acceptable level. Implicit steps have already been taken in that direction, as policy recommendations consider the markets for second-hand cars, for instance (European Commission 2015b: EU13, EU15, EU28, and Eastern Europe), and electric and electronic goods (European Commission 2012: EU12, EU15, EU 27, and southern Member States) in terms of groups of countries. Regime analysis draws attention to commonalities in, and differences between, national market arrangements rather than being limited to geographical scope or time of accession to the Single Market, which are established ways to consider differences. Results from regime analysis would appear to have statistically significant contributions in many markets: two out of three advancing the Single Market and five out of seven advancing markets on the national level.

The markets for meat and meat products and for second-hand cars provide additional examples of the benefits of regime analysis. Both can be considered rather advanced markets: meat products because they are intensively processed and exhibit a wide variation (European Commission 2015b; GfK EU3C 2012). Product expectations may explain differences in the performance of meat markets across regimes and also account for price differences between

Continental and Eastern Europe. In the used car market, on the other hand, unfair commercial practises have been identified as a major problem. Stakeholders such as consumer organizations have been seen as key actors in initiatives to improve conditions. Regime analysis then suggests that similar policy measures could target Eastern Europe.

In conclusion, a dual method of policy formulation which predominantly looks to either the level of the Single Market or the national level fails to highlight economic arrangements and institutional commonalities between groups of Member States. The analysis presented in this paper shows that distinct modes of market performance do exist in different regimes. Making this regime approach explicit, when applicable, would give more leverage both in market analytics and in policy formulation through the addition of a meta level.

Summary and Discussion

This article has empirically reviewed how markets perform across the Single Market of the European Union. Particular attention has been given to an approach that offers more options in consumer policy formulation through one additional level of analysis: a regime approach, which brings together economic and institutional commonalities between countries. It is argued that such an approach could also be apt method of mediating policy between the Single Market and national market levels and provide more easily transferable policy implementations from one country to another (see Svetiev 2013; Weatherill 2013). The literature on varieties of capitalism supports the idea of comparing types of countries when assessing performance (Hall and Soskice 2001; Hanké et al. 2007).

There are indeed observed differences in how countries and groups of countries perform in the Single Market. It can further be argued that arrangements inherited from national markets influence market performance in spite of ongoing market integration and that the commonalities between these arrangements can be considered regimes. These arrangements and their commonalities are, in this article, approached from the perspectives of consumption and production (Trumbull 2006) and consumer law (Micklitz 2004). The approach also embraces transnational policy formulation (see European Commission 2013a) and accounts for a transition towards the Single Market.

Five regimes were identified and studied in this article: the Anglo, Continental European, Eastern European, Scandinavian, and the Southern European regimes, each with its own distinct economic realities and institutional settings. The market performances of these regimes were compared using MPI data from the European Commission's Consumer Markets Scoreboard, which is based on a large-scale survey of consumers' subjective assessments of performances of 52 markets in 30 countries. The Kruskal–Wallis test observed statistically significant levels of differences in market performances of the regimes in seven of the 10 studied markets which the EU has considered to be of particular interest: large electronic appliances, small household appliances, other electronic products, meat and meat products, and fuel for vehicles and second-hand cars. No statistically significant levels of difference could be observed in the markets for large household appliances, bank accounts, and investments and pensions.

The results show that differences indeed appear between the market performances of these regimes and that, accordingly, it could be useful to introduce the regime concept alongside the prevalent approach of comparing performances of national markets with each other when developing the Single Market. A review of the European Commission's policy responses to market studies also shows that there is room for a regime approach, especially in terms of bridging policy formulation between national commonalities and the Single Market. Furthermore, regime insights may simplify analysis of, and policy formulation for, the great number of national markets which form the Single Market and be more likely to provide mutual learning frameworks for policy formulation concerning price differences and consumer awareness.

Assessing market performance in terms of regimes also displays known issues in a new light. Consumers in the Anglo and Continental regimes, which are so crucial to the Single Market, assess their markets to perform better than average. Interestingly, consumers in Eastern European markets, which have transitioned to a market economy most recently, are overall quite content with performances in the studied markets although it has previously been observed that EU consumer law has not travelled particularly successfully to these countries (Svetiev 2013). In contrast, the notion that the Single Market has challenged the Scandinavian regime (see Micklitz 2004) receives empirical support. The Southern European regime performs satisfactorily, although it is hard to assess how much the recent European economic turmoil has already affected results.

At the same time, the obtained insights indicate that policies in the Anglo regime and Continental Europe cannot be transferred wholesale to other regimes. An understanding of the institutional settings is a prerequisite for successful policy measures, yet acknowledging the usefulness of the concept of regimes alongside the country-by-country and Single Market approaches is likely to provide new opportunities for policy formulation. Formulating parallel policy responses for selected markets may provide such opportunities when regime settings are analogous. While it may be ambitious to establish such a threefold consumer policy strategy for the Single Market, it could prove to be a pragmatic way to attempt to standardize levels of market performance across the European countries. The expansion of the European Union and its Single Market has resulted in a situation in which new kinds of regimes need to be considered.

Lastly, there are a number of potential shortcomings to be considered in the regime approach. The identification of countries belonging to regimes remains an open question and should possibly be adapted on a case-by-case basis, taking note of European and national developments. Similarly, uneven performance within regimes merits further attention. Consequently, a regime approach is more of an analytical means for policy formulation than a normative stance on the kinds of differences that are acceptable. This article and its identification of regimes may serve as a starting point in specific endeavours of the former kind, as it is based on identified regimes in the fields of law, policy and institutions, and the economy.

Acknowledgments We kindly thank the two anonymous reviewers for very constructive feedback on our work and our colleagues Raija Järvinen for discussions on the Consumer Markets Scoreboard and Erja Pylvänäinen for collecting the data set used in this article.

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